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SUBJ: AIR GABON: FIRST ANNIVERSARY PROGRESS REPORT

1. SUMMARY: JEAN LOUIS MESSAN, PRESIDENT AND DIRECTOR GENERAL OF AIR GABON, GAVE PRESS CONFERENCE MAY 31 ON OCCASION OF FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF AIR GABON AS AN INTERNATIONAL AIRLINE. HE COVERED PAST YEAR'S PERFORMANCE, PROBLEMS FACED BY THE COMPANY, AND PLANS FOR FUTURE. END SUMMARY.

2. IN MAY 31 PRESS CONFERENCE TO MARK FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF AIR GABON AS AN INTERNATIONAL AIRLINE AND CONCURRENTLY FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF GABON'S WITHDRAWAL FROM AIR AFRIQUE, AIR GABON PRESIDENT AND DIRECTOR GENERAL JEAN LOUIS MESSAN PAINTED FAVORABLE PICTURE OF FIRST YEAR'S ACTIVITIES OF COMPANY, WHILE NOT NEGLECTING PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED, AND BRIEFLY COVERED SOME FUTURE PROJECTS. HE FIRMLY AVOWED THAT AIR GABON WILL BE SUCCESSFUL, PROFITABLE VENTURE IN SPITE OF PROBLEMS AND CURRENT STATE OF ECONOMY IN GABON.

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3. AS REPORTED IN MEDIA, ANNUAL SALES FROM JUNE 1977 TO LATE MAY 1978 INCREASED FROM 5 BILLION CFA (APPROXIMATELY US DOLS 21.7 MILLION) TO 14 BILLION CFA (APPROXIMATELY US DOLS 60 MILLION) AND ARE EXPECTED TO REACH 16.5 BILLION CFA (US DOLS 70 MILLION) BY END OF 1978. PASSENGERS CARRIED FOR PERIOD JUNE 1977 - MAY 1978 INCLUDED 52,000 ON EUROPE - AFRICA ROUTES, 40,000 WITHIN

AFRICA, AND 260,000 ON ROUTES WITHIN GABON; IN TERMS OF PERCENTAGES OF TOTAL PASSENGERS CARRIED, FIGURES ARE 49 PER CENT, 40 PER CENT AND 86 PER CENT, RESPECTIVELY.

4. MESSAN EMPHASIZED THAT BOEING 737 AND REPEAT AND 747 WOULD BE OPERATIONAL BY MID-JULY. IN RADIO BROADCAST HE MENTIONED THAT DELIVERY OF BOEING AIRCRAFT HAD BEEN DELAYED BY STRIKE AT BOEING PLANT AND DISMISSED AS WITHOUT FOUNDATION RUMORS THAT AIR GABON WOULD NOT PROCEED WITH ACQUISITION OF 747. ACCORDING TO MESSAN, CARIBOU CURRENTLY SERVING DOMESTIC ROUTES WOULD SOON BE REPLACED BY TWIN OTTER.

5. ON PERSONNEL SIDE, MESSAN EXPRESSED HOPE THAT EXPATRIATE STAFF NOW REQUIRED FOR COMMERCIAL, ADMINISTRATIVE, AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS OF AIR GABON WOULD BE PHASED OUT IN TWO YEARS' TIME AND REPLACED BY QUALIFIED GABONESE. HE POINTED OUT THAT MAJORITY OF STEWARDS/ STEWARDESSES ON CURRENT FLIGHTS ARE GABONESE AND THAT MORE GABONESE ARE NOW BEING TRAINED IN US AT BOEING AND ELSEWHERE TO SERVE AS FLIGHT CREW MEMBERS. MESSAN MENTIONED THAT SOME PERSONNEL CUTS DURING PAST YEAR WERE NECESSARY AND THAT SALARIES MAY BE REDUCED TO BRING THEM MORE IN LINE WITH PRODUCTIVITY LEVELS.

6. MESSAN BRIEFLY TOUCHED ON RELATIONS WITH
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AIR AFRIQUE WHICH HE CHARACTERIZED AS GOOD AND SAID THAT RESPONSIBLE OFFICIALS OF AIR AFRIQUE AND AIR GABON WOULD MEET IN NEAR FUTURE TO DISCUSS OUTSTANDING ISSUES AND PROBLEMS. TIENKEN

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